The CEA CRITIC

Formerly THE NEWS LETTER of the College English Association

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New York State C.E.A.

A report of the highly successful meeting held last fall at Colgate University never reached the editor. Professor Koller's address at that meeting appears elsewhere in this issue. Officers elected were:

President: Ellsworth Barnard, Alfred University

Vice President: George Kahrl, Elmira College

Secy.-Treas.: Miriam Small, Wells College

Directors: Joan Lyon, Skidmore College; Henry Ten Eyck Perry, University of Buffalo; Kathrine Koller, University of Rochester.

Spring Meeting

This C. E. A. group is planning a meeting at Wells College, Aurora-on-Cayuga, on May 1. There will be an afternoon session and an evening session. The afternoon meeting beginning at 3:00 will be a round table discussion on the subject: "Introducing College Students To Literature". The evening session will be a dinner meeting. Full details in a later issue.

Middle Atlantic C.E.A.

Spring Meeting—April 17, 1948

Place: Goucher College Alumnae Lodge, 1 East 24th Street, Baltimore.

General Topic: Teaching English to the Non-Specialist.

10:45 A. M. Call to Order by President Raymond D. Havens.

Scholarship and The Art of Teaching—by Louis Teeter, George Washington University. Discussion led by L. Giovannini, Catholic Univ.

English Among the Liberal Arts—by Ford K. Brown, St. John's College. Discussion led by F. D. Cooley, Univ. of Maryland.

Election of Officers for 1948-1949.

1:00 P. M. Luncheon for those who attend the meeting. This will be tendered by President and Mrs. David A. Robertson of Goucher. Notice of intention to attend **must** be sent Prof. Elizabeth Nitchie, Goucher College, Baltmore (18), Md., by April 15. Luncheon Speaker: Karl Shapiro. Subject: **Teaching The Poetic Process.**

Description of a Survey Course in Action

English 103, the course taken by most of the freshmen at Cornell College, is listed in our catalogue as freshman composition and literature. "Reading and class discussion," says the description, "serve as a basis for exercise in composition. The course aims to be corrective where it need be, but also to develop judgment and appreciation where it can." (There is another course, 101, for those who have made the lowest scores in the placement tests.)

As we observed students coming into college it seemed to us that the quality most lacking in them was any comprehension of what the role of literature is. To most of them, literature was a lot of chatter, interesting or uninteresting, comprehensible or incomprehensible, about this and that. They had been anthologized into chaos.

The world is full of "why" books. For our modest task we set ourselves a "how." How have human beings behaved? The description of their behavior is literature. Sometimes literature tells why, too, in an unscientific but nevertheless truthful way. What we wanted to do was to trace those hows and whys—to show that the how of one period and people often became the why of the next, to show where an idea had been born, whither it had travelled, and what it was up to among us today.

Since the ideas of their own day are naturally more accessible for eighteen-year-olds than the ideas of by-gone times, we began with contemporary America. For several years we were able to obtain reprints of the anniversary issue of the **Saturday Review of Literature** called "Literature Between Two Wars." Around the critical and historical essays in the review we assembled a group of readings selected as far as possible to illustrate the trends in writing assessed in it. These selections included three novels, **The Grapes of Wrath, The Great Gatsby, Babbitt;** a volume of plays, which included writing by O'Neill, Odets, Anderson, Rice, Wilder, and others representative of the period; a volume of recent short stories; and a group of poems which we se-

(Continued on Page 5)

What Goes On In "English I"

Despite occasional bold experiments, the content of the required course in Freshman English in various colleges is fairly well standardized. But the emphasis on different items almost invariably included in the course varies greatly from institution to institution. There is no characteristic difference among courses offered in private, municipal, and state colleges, nor do the Freshman English courses offered in colleges of one region differ fundamentally from those in another. Many English departments are dissatisfied with the courses they conduct and are considering changes.

These observations are based on answers to a questionnaire recently sent out to colleges mainly in the Southwest, but with samplings from points as widespread as Middlebury College in Vermont, the University of Michigan, the University of North Carolina, and the University of Florida.

In order to see just what the average student is confronted with, let us follow him into a hypothetical average Freshman English course. When he has had just time enough to park his bags in his dormitory room, he is almost sure to be herded into an auditorium and given an examination in English. It will probably be one of a number of nationally known standardized placement or achievement tests some form of which he may already have taken in high school, although there is an outside chance that it will have been compiled by the English department at the college. In one out of four institutions, if his score is high enough — though that is improbable since he is only an average student—, he will be excused from taking Freshman English. Such a grade at the University of Alabama or the University of Mississippi would land him in a special "fast" section. Elsewhere he has a little better than even chance of being registered in a section with classmates whose test scores indicate ability comparable to his own.

He will meet with these classmates three fifty-minute periods a week throughout two semes-

(Continued on Page 4)

The Functions of the College English Dept.

"What are the functions of a college English department," I asked the members of the staff who were in the office when I turned from the phone after accepting Mr. Lawson's invitation to speak this evening. "Like Caesar's wife," murmured one, "to be all things to all people." I can agree with that slightly ribald remark if we may interpret it to mean that in English studies we find all the disciplines and riches of the humanities where he who seeks may find the answer to many of his questions about the meaning and significance of this life.

If I may follow the Elizabethans and paraphrase the ancients, I shall say that the aim of English studies is to teach and to delight, and to do both for the relief of man's estate. There is a great need to consider the functions of any department today in terms of what education must do and what it can do.

For example, can the course I had in the history of the English novel be justified today? Pages read from Raleigh and Baker unacknowledged by the professor (only a chance visit to the library revealed all to me) and a series of factual quizzes, "who was Smelfungus", taught me the catch phrases about forerunners of the English novel, realism, naturalism, but nothing about criticism or modern writers such as Virginia Woolf or Joyce. I cannot believe that such a specialized factual history of a type can be justified in education today. What does this have to do with war, hunger, economic struggles, the question of what to do with the great scientific forces which we have in our hands and what to do with the human energy which mechanical force can set free? What constitutes an ethical code today? What is integrity? What is social integrity? These are the problems which concern us now. Bunyan and Defoe may have something to teach us about these problems not because they are the forerunners of the novel, but because they have much to say about human nature and because their way of saying it is charged with emotion or conviction or merely because they awaken us to think about problems of living.

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THE CEA CRITIC

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Application for entry as Second Class matter at Brooklyn, N. Y., is pending.

The Place of Letters In Liberal Education

The study of literature is central to liberal education because:

1. Reading is an almost universal source of pleasure. The enjoyment of some reading (magazine fiction, detective stories, popular novels, and the like) requires no study; but for the full enjoyment of the best literature of all epochs, study is necessary.

2. Literature arrests the rapid flow of experience, holds it up for contemplation and understanding. It removes us momentarily to new worlds, and returns us to the familiar with fresh awareness. What was ours becomes more ours, and we recognize the familiar for the first time. Literature reveals the complexity of human character —the working of desires and motives, the traits in which men are alike and different. It explores the meaning of men's relations to one another; it reveals the connection of character and destiny.

3. Literature makes real the continuity of past with present by helping to explain the societies that have existed at any time and how they came to be.

4. In showing forth the various kinds of life, evil as well as heroic, literature reveals the moral problems and meanings of experience. It therefore acquaints the student with moral choice and the consequence of action. Proper teaching of literature should create in the student a resistance on the one hand, to corrosive cynicism, and on the other, to narrow and unenlightened fanaticism. It should make him aware of the variety as well as the constancy of moral responses to experience. The full understanding of a piece of literature entails the commitment of one's affections and sometimes even one's beliefs, and thus the effect of the intensive study of literature should be growth in the extent and clarity of one's allegiances. So literary study, both secular and religious, provides moral enlightenment by making more elaborate and more firm the understanding of what it is to be human.

From Report Com. on Lib. Educ., A.A.C., **Assn. Am. Col. Bull.**, XXXIII, 4, Dec. '47.

What Sort of Person, The English Teacher?

Regardless of the "level" at which we function as teachers of English, regardless of the immediate subject-matter, we should exemplify the virtue of magnanimity — of largeness of mind and spirit, or in William Hazlitt's expression, of "comprehensiveness of soul." This inclusive characteristic implies justice tempered by the Biblical compassion, loving - kindness, charity, or love. It includes historic imagination and philosophic perspective.

To be large-minded does not necessitate that we be long-headed. As Chesterton pointed out in his witty criticism of Arnold's notion of the grand style: one does not have to be solemn in order to be serious. Humor, the comic spirit, when that grace is given us, is to be welcomed.

Nor should largeness of spirit be restricted to English teachers, or for that matter, to teachers in general. Yet it is particularly within our province; for as teachers of literature, of literary masterpieces, we are frequently and intimately brought into touch with largeness of spirit, with the great potentialities of human nature. As Longinus put it, sublimity is the "echo of the great soul". Greatness of mind is, or should be, the very stuff with which we work. If, moreover, we try to make this largeness of spirit our essential orientation, and if we enjoy even a portion of it, we shall find that it directs or saturates whatever subject we may at the moment be teaching —from **King Lear** to the predicate adjective.

But we must not seduce ourselves into pseudo-magnanimity, into thinking that by merely entering emotionally and imaginatively into the literary masterpieces, and by imitating the greatness of that work for the edification of our students, we ourselves absorb comprehensiveness and become, to a degree, great-minded.

John Henry Newman, in one of his "Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations", points out that there are writers who, through an effort of the emotions and the imagination, may capture and transmit to their readers moral and spiritual experiences (specifically Christian grace) which, in the lives of others, may be realities, but which, for them, are merely make-believe. Newman concludes:

"And thus it often happens, that those who seem so amiable and good and so trustworthy, when we only know them by their writings, disappoint us so painfully, if at length we come to have a personal acquaintance with them. We do not recognize in the living being the eloquence or the wisdom which so enchanted us. He is rude, perhaps, and unfeeling; he is selfish; he is dictatorial, he is sensual, he is empty-minded and frivolous; while we in our simplicity had antecedently thought him the very embodiment of purity and tenderness, or an oracle of heavenly truth."

I think of a like pattern of experience when I suggest that we teachers who do profess great-mindedness and who traffic in it, need to be on our guard against pseudo-magnanimity, for, in effect, this makes of us asses parading in a lion's skin, and it causes at least two-fold harm. First, it encourages in us a false conceit of moral and spiritual excellence. Second, it is likely to have bad effects on our students. The more discerning among them will recognize, during our interpretive mimicry and histrionics, or immediately afterwards, that we ourselves are hollow vessels—temporary containers and vehicles of a largeness of spirit we do not really possess. The less discerning, as they mature, may come to the same conclusion — months, years later. As a result of the disillusionment that follows the recognition, these students may lose whatever positive humanistic values they may temporarily have experienced when we, the teachers, acted as cultural middlemen in the classroom.

In what has so aptly been called his "Biographia Literaria", Milton tells how he—

"was confirmed in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things; not presuming to sing praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that which is praiseworthy." (Apology for Smectymnuus)

To expect this lofty dedication, experience, and practice of magnanimity of us English teachers would, I realize, be asking too much. It would be asking that we become so many Homers, Dantes, or Miltons. But is it too much to ask of ourselves that we be thoroughly persuaded of the great worth of this quality, and that we try to have it permeate and sublimate our teachings and our own lives as well as the lives of our students?

Akin to pseudo-magnanimity is another occupational disease which is likely to debilitate us English teachers as we work with the very stuff of greatness of spirit. It might be called **vicarious magnanimity.** It is a subtle form of moral self-indulgence. It rests content with an inoperative emotional and imaginative magnanimity stimulated through association with great literature, but not productive of "fruits" of character. It omits the final link in a chain which should extend from greatness of idea and sentiment to corresponding greatness of character and action. It is a kind of short-circuited or involuted magnanimity. It gives us the delights of large ideas, noble sentiments, lofty ideals, without exacting of us the price to be paid for the privilege of all this flattering grandeur of heart, this exaltation of imagination and intellect. At bottom it is sentimentality, as Chesterton has defined that term: indulgence in immediately pleasurable and otherwise gratifying emotions without accepting the duties and responsibilities which go with these feelings.

The New Sciences have provided marvelously delicate or powerful techniques, processes, and instruments — mental and physical; but there still remains the problem of the right use of these ingenious discoveries and inventions. The virtue of magnanimity, with its more specific attributes, provides a directive and a "telos" for the utilization of our **novum organum**—on behalf of civilization and human-

ity. Further, it fosters that total habit of mind or, as Hazlitt called it, "temper of mind" — which we so sorely need in our desperate efforts to articulate a world consciousness and a world community.

Especially in this post-war period (which many already regard as the prelude to the next war!), when so much stress is placed upon what is immediately and tangibly useful, and when there is widespread cynicism as to the worth of the moral and social intangibles suggested by the term "magnanimity", we teachers of English must try to make this virtue dominantly current. For it gives to man some of his chief claims to dignity, respect, and hope.

MAXWELL H. GOLDBERG
University of Massachusetts

Professor Goldberg's paper was adapted from a talk given at the fall conference of the N. E. Assn. of Teachers of English.

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I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaker, the Assistant Editor, is in charge of I'VE BEEN READING. He is Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Comments on reviews will be welcomed.

STANFORD SHORT STORIES: 1946.
Ed. Wallace Stegner. Stanford University Press, 1947. ix: 107 pp. $2.00.

Stanford Short Stories: 1946 is a first year's harvest from The Stanford Writing Center Program, supported by a $75,000 five-year fellowship and prize grant from Dr. Edward H. Jones and directed by Wallace Stegner **(Remembering Laughter, The Big Rock Candy Mountain)**, who came to Stanford cross-continent from Harvard.

The slender volume contains ten stories, two each by five young authors, three men and two women. Short biographical sketches of the authors are appended. According to Professor Stegner in his Preface, all these stories "are not amateur performances, but professional, or so nearly professional as to confuse a critic." Stegner goes on to say, "Any writing program in a university must justify itself ultimately by its ability to produce professional writers." Actually, six of the ten had won previous publication, three in nationally recognized magazines. The others, Stegner implies, were deserving, but were too experimental or violated mass-circulation taboos. "A university is an area of free intellectual inquiry, but a magazine with a large circulation is not."

All the stories are readable. They are smooth, finished writing, with very few touches of amateurism, such as the violation of point of view which I noticed in one. Perhaps the point of "A Stranger's Funeral" might be clearer; the symbolism of "Who Made This Subway?" will baffle some, or necessitate a second reading. None are great literature, but perhaps this is too much to expect of the contemporary short story, done in college or elsewhere. Of them all, I believe only "Dom Pedro's Crown" makes no pretense to values beyond mere entertainment; certainly most have social, or sociological, implications.

What strikes me most is the extremely contemporary nature of the subject matter. Despite what some writers' market guide say, the demand for war-material stories must be good. All of the six stories by men are the work of veterans, and all incorporate war-time experiences. Of the stories by women, those of Miss Byers have no pronounced contemporary flavor, but those of Mrs. Bellows do. Not one of the ten stories chronicles normal, happily-adjusted, adult life even in the denouement. Five include references to violations of traditional morality. Alcoholic beverages figure in eight and sleeping potions in the other two. The war and the first of the peace must have greatly increased the demand for both stimulants and sedatives. The authors of these stories are highly conscious of "the turbulence of the times," but the atomic age is recognized, I believe, only in one lone reference to Hiroshima.

The biographical sketches show that all the stories derive with remarkable directness from the recent experiences of their authors, who have seen a good deal of the world. Once again we observe that the material of fiction is life, though art must still add its adornments. I am left wondering why the ten stories do not represent ten authors instead of five, and why there is no non-war story by a man. Subsequent annual volumes will doubtless be watched by the publishers, but should be of at least as much interest to teachers of English. There are no islands any more.

Cecil B. Williams
Oklahoma A. & M. College

THE POETIC IMAGE, by Cecil Day Lewis, Oxford University Press, New York, 1947. 157 pp., $3.00.

Reading this book was a depressing experience for me. Without conscious intention, I am sure, Mr. Day Lewis convinced this reader at least that he must be a sort of poet himself in order to understand much modern poetry, and also books about it. To be sure, Mr. Day Lewis says that he has tried to weed out all jargon, and he laughs gently at critics of poetry who "live very largely by annotating, codifying, refining, transmogrifying, or delicately wincing at" the "coarse and fundamental" truths of poetry. However, in spite of this welcome objectivity and humor Mr. Day Lewis frequently gets involved in the inevitable abstractions and even in the deep well of the poet's unconscious. He quotes with approval Walter Raleigh's remark that "you cannot lecture on really pure poetry any more than you can talk about the ingredients of pure water," but Mr. Day Lewis persists in trying despite the warning. However, the fact that I could not follow him all the way is not necessarily a criticism of the book; I feel sure that other readers with better, or at least different, equipment will find much that is illuminating and even profound.

The chapters which I believe will be most generally useful are two in which the author stands back a little from the images themselves and considers his subject in more or less historical perspective. The first of these, "The Field of Imagery", surveys types and theories of imagery in English poetry and criticism during the last four hundred years. The other chapter which views images against a larger background is the one entitled "The Living Image". In this Mr. Day Lewis discusses "some of the difficulties confronting the poet who wishes to be modern," and in so doing throws much light on the aims and methods of his colleagues and contemporaries.

JOHN K. REEVES
Skidmore College

(Continued on Page 4)

Taos Field School of the Arts

The Univ. of New Mexico is sponsoring an integrated course of Study in Literature, Music, and Painting at Taos, June 12 to Aug. 7, 1948. Enrollment limited to 20 men and 20 women. Cost, including Dormitory Fee, $140.00. Write Dr. Daryle E. Keefer, U. of N. M., Albuquerque.

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UNUSUAL WORDS AND HOW THEY CAME ABOUT, by Edwin Radford (Philosophical Library, 1946). $3.75.

This book carries on the 19th century tradition of the Isn't-it-perfectly-amazing school of research. As a bewildering potpourri of scholarship, conjecture, bias, and digression it deserves a place just beyond Archbishop Trench on **The Study of Words.** Mr. Radford takes a quaint stand on linguistic change: "Xylonite. Is the correct name for celluloid." "Aisle. A much misused word. It should not be used to describe the central nave of a church. . . . It applies rightly only to the wings or wing of the church, **aile** being French for wing. . . ." Papists are put in their place: they are told that Pope comes from "the Greek infantile word for father"; readers are solemnly assured that people who are granted an audience with the Holy Father get a chance to kiss his foot (p. 131). At other times the author lets himself go on such unusual entries as "Sleep. Scientists estimate that during an eight hours' sleep the average human being changes position at least thirty-five times" and "Bible. There are more acres in Yorkshire than there are letters in the Bible." Further amusement is furnished by blunders like "Magnun opus", Skeats for Skeat, Ye for Ye, and a reference to the Greek word **sol** for sun.

It is worth remembering that Walter Skeat's reliable and scholarly **Concise Etymological Dictionary** (Oxford Press) is just as interesting, three times as big, and costs about a dollar less.

GEORGE S. McCUE
Colorado College

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, by G. A. Sambrook, M.A. (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1947, 110 pp. $.60).

One who has neglected the study of the English language will be easily enticed to read this little book in the Essential English Library, intended mainly for foreign students, but also of unusual interest to English readers.

Short, illustrated chapters discuss the most interesting words contributed by the Romans, Celts, Danes, and Normans, and trace the transformation of Middle English into the richness and variety of Modern English. We also learn how new words are made, how to use the dictionary, and something about slang. J. G. E.

THE USE OF LANGUAGE, by Henry F. Pommer and William M. Sale, Jr., New York, F. S. Crofts & Co., 1947. 258 pp.

In this engaging and unhackneyed work Messrs. Pommer and Sale have combined a brief treatise on the Nature of Language with chapters on the Grammar of English, the Elementary Principles of Rhetoric, and Matters of Form. There are also exercises at the back of the book. Its stimulating approach reminds one of the works of the late Henshaw Ward; but while the superior student and his teacher may take great delight in the discussion of the objective "who" and the emphatic accusative (although the authors do not call it that) after the verb "to be", the immature plodder may find himself more than ever befuddled.

R. BALFOUR DANIELS
University of Houston

ESSAYS OF SHAKESPEARE—An Arrangement by George Coffin Taylor, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1947), 144 pp. $2.50.

Quotations from Shakespeare's plays and sonnets are here put together in essay form by a scholar of remarkable memory. His aim is to show Shakespeare as a thinker in a better way than his thoughts do when scattered among many characters and plays. For those who are interested in their setting and authenticity, a key to the passages is appended giving the source of each essay by lines.

The whole results in something like Bacon's **Essays** and would go far to support Chesterton's private theory that Shakespeare wrote Bacon's works. It sounds surprisingly like Shakespeare throughout. This neat little volume is like cod liver oil concentrate — the sunshine is there, but the form is strange. J. G. E.

WHAT GOES ON?—
(Continued from Page 1)

ters of approximately eighteen weeks each. A little more than one period a week will be devoted to discussion of such matters as grammar, punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure, which he has heard about most of his life but has never seen much point to understanding. These topics will be discussed somewhat more frequently early in the course than during the second semester. In preparation for such sessions of the class, it is fairly likely that he will be assigned exercises of a sort with which he is already painfully familiar —"practice leaves," sentences to correct, and so on.

Almost every week during the first semester he will be required to hand in an original theme; during the second semester theme assignments may not be quite so frequent. Two or three times each semester he may have to turn out a theme during the class period. He will probably have to write out corrections on his themes after his instructor has read and graded them. Discussion of themes and of such mysteries as unity, coherence, and emphasis will occupy almost exactly one period a week. His instructor will confer with him privately about his themes as frequently as he can find the time to do so—usually that will not be very often.

About one day out of four—probably less than that the first semester but more frequently the second—he will be assigned to read a certain number of pages of "literature." Depending upon the college and the section in which our freshman finds himself, his reading may be selected from works ranging from the classics (**The Odyssey, Oedipus Rex, Hamlet, Walden**) to an article from the current issue of **Readers' Digest.** In many instances it will be assigned primarily to excite his interest and stimulate class discussion (selections from **The Republic, Middletown,** or an anthology of recent periodical articles and short stories).

In about one college out of five, our student will spend two or three weeks getting a smattering of history of the language and semantics. He may also spend a little time learning the use of the library, studying forms of business letters, and so on. Although the

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BOOK NOTE

The Practice Of Exposition
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Harold L. Haley

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whole course is designed to be utilitarian, our average student, having got along all right so far with his inadequate grasp of the skills it seeks to develop, sees little point in taking it too seriiously.

If such a course does not sound particularly interesting, it should be remembered that its content and emphasis are largely dictated by the inability of the average entering studen to read and write simple English prose effectively. The quality of instruction he gets in Freshman English is further limited by the necessity of spreading small appropriations for salaries thin among enough teachers, whatever their qualifications, to provide an instructor for each section. English departments would like to do a more effective job.

It would seem that two things might be done to improve the course in Freshman English. Both are administrative. First, to raise the rather low objectives implicit in the courses as they have been reported. Second, to appropriate more money for departmental salaries and to assign more hours and rooms in the class schedule.

GEORGE L. SIXBEY
Centenary College of Louisiana

(Limitations of space forced editorial pruning of many illustrative details. Ed.)

Does not Professor Sixbey's account of what goes on in English I suggest the desirability of more than administrative changes?—Editor.

SURVEY COURSE—

(Continued from Page 1)

lected ourselves and had mimeographed.

To this part of their work the students respond for the most part with interest. I do not mean that all like what they read; far from it. Their immediate reactions furnish the subject matter of their first themes, and the themes in turn the basis of further class discussion. At the end of the term each writes a longer paper.

In this work we try to keep constantly before the student two points: (1) the way in which this American literature was created out of what the America and the Americans of the time were, and (2) the values that were apparently the existing ones, and the angry demand for others, cultural and economic, that seemed to the writers not to exist in America.

The next step is to go back into the past. We go back to Greece. We use either the Iliad or the Odyssey, three tragedies and a comedy. In addition students buy Edith Hamilton's mythology. We try to make students see what happened in Greece as a result of the conflict of religion and science; why Euripides' ideas on the gods are so different from those of Homer, even of Aeschylus; how the questionings of the Sophists, their theories on the secular origin of morals, relativity of knowledge, and individualism represent a development of the sort that produced the questioning and criticism in America during the period between the wars.

For the Roman period we use the Aeneid. Of all the peoples of the past, the Romans seem to be closest to American students. The romantic elements in Greek and Roman writing, particularly in the work of Ovid, provide a background for the study of medieval romance. At times we have used **Sir Gawain and the Green Knight**; at present we use **Aucassin and Nicolette.** For another important aspect of medievalism we have used the **Inferno.** This is, I think, the least successful of the readings The Middle Ages seem more remote than Greece, certainly more remote than Rome.

The course closes with reading in the Renaissance period, which of course means Shakespeare. In the past we have also used a selection of biblical literature between the Greek and Roman readings.

This year we have an innovation, a text book. Last year the freshmen purchased seventeen different items ranging in price from five cents to several dollars. We felt we had to select a text this year and are using Hibbard's **Writers of the Western World,** which contains more of the items we wanted than any other one thing that we could find.

What success we have depends, I think, not only on how well we can remember our goals, but also on how well we can can remember and convey the truth that this is literature, these are human beings, and that neither literature nor human beings can be simplified into mere goals, into mere illustrations of ideas.

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*A paper read at the Iowa Colleges Conference on English, St. Ambrose College, October 10-11, 1947.

FUNCTIONS—

(Continued from Page 1)

A consideration of what we are educating people for these days may help us to determine the function of the English department and the aim of English studies. I have said that English studies should teach and delight and do both for the relief of man's estate. Therefore, we must offer pleasure and profit of the highest sort and in terms of the greatest needs of today. By profit I do not mean the short-term profit of English 106, Radio Script Writing, credit 2 hours, and by pleasure I do not mean Professor Snook's snap course in Browning or the fine show Professor Front can put on in Drama 116. **Profit and pleasure can be made inseparable in the development of disciplines of thinking, in determining intellectual honesty, in freedom from claptrap emotionalism, in hard-won wisdom, in newly-awakened sensitiveness to those less obvious capacities for delight, wonder, pity, sorrow, and joy, and in the ability to relate what we read to our own world.**

In order to achieve this sense of the immediacy of what we do as well as to achieve the sense of long-range value, it seems to me that it is the function of the English department to present at least three types of courses which should fulfill these aims, to evaluate the nature of the major in the field, to urge graduate schools to train teachers with a broader concept of the problems which an educated man must face today, and to demand from the English faculties themselves an honest and constant appraisal of their work.

The first problem which confronts the English department is that of the first-year course. Shall it be a stereotyped course in grammar review? The daily theme? Description, narration, exposition? Over the syllabus for such a course live departments labor constantly. Methods will vary from a course such as Colgate has to a course

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such as Hiram College develops. But whatever the method, its first function is to **teach people the use of words as the tools of thought.** "For if we clearly consider what our intention is when we speak, we shall find it is nothing else but to unfold to others the thoughts of our own mind." Dante is as modern as Mr. Richards. A discriminating sense of what words mean enables a man to live in his environment of newspaper and radio with intelligence. When a freshman writes that "as medieval Knight lived in an ironclad aroma and exposed his identity by lifting his visor" his powers of communication are somewhat limited. When in a September issue of the NEWSLETTER a business man complained **about the inability of the highly specialized chemist** to convey his **ideas to laymen** he cut the ground away from **those who demand courses in English for Engineers or chemists.** That type of course seems to me to offer short-term value and fails to teach the ones who may need it most, the wealth of words for the communication of all ideas. The **second important function** of the first year course is **the development of a sense of logic and the place of logic in the organization of any ideas** about a central theme. How it is done is the problem of every staff in terms of its student body. Logical organization of ideas is profitable in long-term values as well as in its immediate returns. This, too, the business world cries for, and I think it behooves the teachers of these first-year courses to emphasize the very common problems of the expression of ideas and the organization of material in every field. We have heard enough of the student who writes carefully for the English department and ignores all he has been taught in preparing papers in other fields. For this reason the first-year course which attempts to bring a correlation between fields of study by working with students in presenting papers in other courses is very defensible. If a course in English studies is to serve as Latin served in earlier times it must serve first as a tool for the expression of ideas.. And this approach is more profitable than the highly specialized approach of offering a special English course for an already too specialized science.

The second type of course which fulfills the aim of profit and delight should be the course which presents literature for the continuous development of powers of discrimination. If students are to receive the profit from reading, they must learn the strict discipline of criticism, evaluation, and interpretation: the exactness of the author's meaning. And in learning to read with discrimination, a student learns to interpret personal problems as well as social issues—if this is the aim of the teacher. Though I should not be one to teach **Macbeth** as a crime deterrent.

As for pleasure — need I comment? Probably I should. Because the choice of material becomes an endless question. It should be based on the relationship of literature to significant problems and **Aedipus Rex,** Plato, **Crime and Punishment** and countless other books are as significant to-day as yesterday. The obvious faults of great masters' courses and survey courses call for honest—and sometimes humiliating analyses of our success and failures. If student never comes back for more—something is very wrong indeed. He has found little profit and less pleasure.

In the third place it would seem to me to be the function of the college English department to show the interrelation of all fields of knowledge as they seek expression in literature, and to break down the vested interest of narrow departmentalism. History, philosophy, sociology, psychology, the natural sciences are all woven into literature. To be more specific, I believe that much profit and delight could be derived from courses, probably "period" courses, where a student is made aware of the social realities and complex problems of a time which would make him see history, literature, and philosophy or scientific thought as interrelated expressions of a culture which, like his own, faced the problem of moral codes of conduct and economic stress. As he glimpses the forces which moved that age, he may learn to look more intelligently on those complex problems which seem so bewildering in his own age. A Period course too often means a course in Victorian Poetry, or Seventeenth Century Poetry and implies that no one ever wrote prose. These courses should be worked out among departments unless you are fortunate enough to have a professor who can handle them. Courses of this type seem to belong naturally in the senior year. Would they be a more rewarding study than, let us say, the traditional course in Beowulf or Chaucer?

There is a need at present for a general overhauling of many an English department's conception of a program for majors. How far do the present requirements meet in any way the problem of the future teacher, graduate student, or the student who majors in English because he wants a cultural background? In planning the curriculum for an English major what constitutes genuine profit for the relief of their estate?

The demands of education today call for teachers who are prepared to present literature as it is related to the varied moral, economic, and social aspects of life and not merely as a bibliographical exercise. In order to prepare teachers to accept the challenge, to make—or keep—literature a humanistic study as the classics were for the Renaissance—the graduate schools must add to their scholarly discipline the equally important discipline of wide reading and critical interpretation. The graduate student must not remain ignorant of ways of approaching his contemporary literature, nor be unread in literature of other countries. When a group of instructors decided not to include Dante in a sophomore course because they felt they were unprepared to teach it, I appreciated their caution and the wisdom of the decision on other grounds, but I could only condemn the education which had permitted them to leave reputable schools with Ph.D. degrees, unfamiliar with the greatest and most beautiful expression of medieval wisdom. The gap between the undergraduate and the product of our graduate schools must be narrowed. For the success of education depends on the men and women who teach it. To keep the English studies vital to men as sources of wisdom and strength in those private and public questions which confront us daily, the teacher must have the humanist's vision. "St. Socrates pray for us."

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